

VZCZCXRO3569  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHFR #0286/01 0571549  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
O 261549Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5631  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000286

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2024

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING SYRIA: INSIGHTS FROM JEAN-CLAUDE COUSSERAN

REF: A. DAMASCUS 142

[1](#)B. DAMASCUS 125

[1](#)C. DAMASCUS 120

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen H. Allegrone, reas  
ons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: Veteran Middle East troubleshooter and former French Ambassador to Syria (among other posts) Jean-Claude Cousseran assessed th  
Damascus, it should "get something tangible" and appoint a  
heavyweight ambassador. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Jean-Claude Cousseran is arguably the most distinguished French Arabist of his generation. A former ambassador to Syria (1993-96) and t  
equivalent). He is currently the Secretary General of France's Academie Diplomatique Internationale, a foreign policy think tank established in

Is Syria's Change in Behavior Real?  
-----

[1](#)3. (S/NF) In a recent meeting with Post's NEA Watcher, Cousseran said the Syrian regime has clearly chosen to change the tone of its dealings

[1](#)4. (S/NF) The trick for the West, he continued, is to determine how best to exploit this opportunity while it lasts. Splitting Syria from Irar

Two Bits of Advice  
-----

[1](#)5. (S/NF) Cousseran offered two bits of advice in the event  
that the U.S. were to engage with Damascus. First, he urged  
that Washington should "get something tangible" from the  
Syrian regime. He cautioned that the Syrians were masters of  
avoiding any real concessions and were adept at showering  
visitors with wonderful atmospherics and delightful  
conversations before sending them away empty handed. On the  
other hand, he also warned against over-reaching. "If the  
U.S. were to aim for something too difficult, such as urging  
Syria to sever its ties to Hamas or Hizballah, than it would  
get nowhere," he said. Second, he urged that Washington send  
a powerful ambassador to Damascus. "You need someone like  
Edward Djerejian or Chris Ross, someone who can be a real  
player. Remember that there is a very tiny circle of advisors around Bashar, and it contains both hawks and moderates. The U.S. ambassador ne

PARIS 00000286 002 OF 002

PEKALA